RECORD OF DECISION

Blackhall-McAnulty Analysis

Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District

Carbon County, Wyoming

T.12N., 13N. & 14N., R.81W., R.82W. & R.83W.

February 2004

Lead Agency: **USDA FOREST SERVICE**

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland

Responsible Official: Scott G. Armentrout, District Ranger

For Further Information Contact:

Terry DeLay, Project Leader
Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District
PO Box 249, Saratoga WY 82331
(307) 326-2518

SUMMARY OF DECISION

I have selected **Alternative 2** as described in the Blackhall-McAnulty Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and associated record, with minor changes to the travel management portion (see *Description of the Decision*, ROD-7 - ROD-12). My decision is based upon comments received from interested parties, and direction from the 1985 Medicine Bow National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). After consideration of all the alternatives, I believe this alternative best addresses both the purpose and need for the proposal and the significant issues for the Blackhall-McAnulty Analysis Area.

A variety of silvicultural treatments have been designed to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe and mountain pine beetle in area lodgepole pine stands, increase patch size of forested areas that have had past harvest, thin area stands to improve resiliency and reduce susceptibility to future disease and insect attack, salvage fire damaged trees, and to promote and maintain area aspen stands.

Commercial silvicultural treatments include: clearcutting, overstory removal, fire/beetle salvage, sanitation/salvage, shelterwood, and commercial thinning. Harvest units are situated predominantly within areas that have had past timber sale entries.

Predominantly non-forested areas dominated by sagebrush and bitterbrush in the vicinity of Cunningham and Holroyd Parks will be broadcast burned during the spring to create a mosaic of shrub, forbs, and grass age classes, to improve forage for big game and livestock, and to encourage new aspen and ponderosa pine regeneration in areas where present.

Forested areas on the National Forest directly adjacent to private land and structures in the vicinity of Jerry Park and along the Forest Boundary in the Skyline Ridge area will be treated through a combination of commercial and service contracts to reduce hazardous fuels.

Stands of predominantly lodgepole pine and aspen (seedling/sapling in size) within regenerated clearcuts that are experiencing a slowing of growth due to overcrowding will be hand-thinned with chainsaws to promote a healthier, faster growing, beetle and disease-resistant future stand.

The current western terminus of the Big Creek Trail will be moved to a better location, where a trailhead with adequate vehicle parking and signing will be established. The central trailhead on the 498.2A road will also be improved and a trail bridge installed over the Middle Fork of Big Creek and another over the South Fork Big Creek to facilitate horse, foot, and mountain bike use.

Implementation of a number of watershed improvement projects within the project area will help to reduce soil erosion and sediment entering area creeks.

Approximately 31.5 miles of roads will be decommissioned, removing them from the Forest Service road system. Most decommissioned segments and closures are short spurs or have parallel roads within one mile. This decision completes “Phase 2” travel management analysis in this project area, as described in the Forest-wide Travel Management Decision (October 2000). Implementation of these projects will help to reduce soil erosion and sediment entering area creeks. Big game will also benefit from increased forage on roadbeds, increased travel distance without crossing an active road, and increased number of areas where animals can get away from potential traffic stress.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

My decision is a solution that meets law and attempts to find balance with agency direction, forest needs, scientific analysis, and social acceptance. I have made this decision, based on extensive public involvement that I actively sought and received. My decision meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) by responding to the Purpose and Need, responding to Significant Issues identified in the planning process, and responding to comments received from the public during the EIS comment period provided.

The rationale for my decision to implement Alternative 2 is based on the stated Purpose and Need (FEIS pages 12-13) and Significant Issues (FEIS pages 15-16).

The stated ***purpose*** for this project is to "implement management direction from the 1985 Medicine Bow National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan to manage for ecosystem management needs." ***Alternative 2 meets this Purpose better than the other action alternatives. The No-Action Alternative does not meet the stated Purpose.***

Based on Forest Plan direction, National Fire Plan emphasis, the Forest-wide Travel Management Decision, and the analysis area's current existing condition versus the desired condition, the Forest Service has determined the following resource ***needs*****:**

Vegetative Diversity/Habitat Improvement

- Wildfire suppression and subsequent natural succession in the area has allowed some relic ponderosa stands and many area aspen stands to convert to subalpine fir and lodgepole pine dominated stands, causing a loss of important wildlife habitat and a decrease in vegetative diversity.

There is a need to maintain and restore aspen and ponderosa pine to its historic prominence.

Alternative 2 includes treatments to promote and maintain aspen where it occurs, improve habitat capability, maintain growing stock levels, increase forage available to wildlife and enhance vegetation diversity, direction identified in the Forest Plan.

- Fire suppression, natural succession, and timber harvesting (strip clearcuts) have reduced the natural patch size of a number of stands in the vicinity, which have decreased their value for big game security and as potential habitat for dependent wildlife species.

There is a need to maintain and manage for a mosaic of larger patches of forested vegetation, to better emulate natural wildfire patterns and better reflect historic vegetative patterns.

Alternative 2 provides the best design and greatest number of acres to address this need.

- The non-native plant cheatgrass was found to be present in the vicinity of Cunningham and Holroyd Park. Cheatgrass out-competes native vegetation, reducing habitat for dependent wildlife.

There is a need to reduce non-native cheatgrass within the area.

Alternative 2 includes treatment and restoration of areas currently infested with non-native cheatgrass.

Forest Health/Resiliency

- Since 1997 there has been marked increase in mountain pine beetle activity and subsequent tree mortality in the eastern portion of the area. The presence of dense, overstocked lodgepole pine stands, lodgepole infected with mistletoe, and/or stands where yearly mortality exceeds growth greatly increases the probability of an insect epidemic occurring in the vicinity.

There is a need to improve the health and resiliency of area forests to reduce the current outbreak of mountain pine beetle and to decrease their susceptibility to insects and disease.

The Forest Service is compelled and obligated to consider suppression and prevention treatments in response to insect and disease populations that threaten forested tree stands with an integrated pest management approach consistent with resource management objectives. Alternative 2 includes a mix of treatment activities designed to prevent and suppress the spread of mountain pine beetle (MPB) and reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe from currently infested lodgepole pines to uninfested lodgepole pines.

Timber Salvage/Wood Production

- During the summer of 2002 the lightning-caused Bear Mountain South Fire burned approximately 500 acres in the northeastern portion of the area. The western portion of the fire burned into some of the harvest units proposed under the original McAnulty proposal, along with a number of stands classified as being suitable for timber production.
- Much of the proposed project area is within a 7E Management Area, which places emphasis on wood production. Local and regional sawmills depend on timber supplies from federal lands for their operation.

There is a need to contribute to the Forest Plan goal of providing for timber harvest.

Along with suppression and prevention, Alternative 2 is designed to salvage and remove dead trees from forested lands classified as being suitable (Management Area 7E), to keep them productive and positively contributing to the Forest's future allowable sale quantity.

Hazardous Fuels Reduction

- Early day logging, years of fire suppression, and lack of recent vegetation management on National Forest lands surrounding the private land in-holding Jerry Park and adjacent to private land in the Skyline Ridge area have resulted in forest conditions that have a high risk of uncontrollable, high intensity fires occurring.

There is a need to treat area vegetation along portions of the Forest boundary to reduce the wildfire hazard to adjacent private land and structures.

Alternative 2 includes hazardous fuels reduction treatments to area vegetation along portions of the Forest boundary to reduce the wildfire hazard to adjacent private land and structures.

Soil Erosion/Sedimentation

- Phase 2 of the Forest-wide Travel Management Decision (October 2000) requires completion of site-specific travel management analyses to decide the future status of the Forest Transportation System. There are a number of roads within the project area that have been identified as requiring maintenance or closure to reduce soil erosion and sediment entering area creeks. High open road densities in the eastern portion of the area could potentially be degrading wildlife security areas and habitat.

There is a need to improve the area's wildlife habitat capability and minimize human-caused soil erosion within the area.

Alternative 2 includes watershed restoration projects, as well as road closures in the eastern portion of the area, which will improve the area's wildlife habitat capability and reduce soil erosion and sediment entering area creeks.

This decision addresses the significant issues identified under the Blackhall-McAnulty analysis, as listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Significant Issues Identified under the Blackhall-McAnulty Analysis

Significant Issue	How Decision Addresses Issue
Clearcutting	Clearcutting most nearly matches the role formerly played by stand replacing forest fires and is often considered the optimum method for regenerating aspen and lodgepole pine, and is also the most effective method for treating stands heavily infected with dwarf mistletoe.
Cumulative Effects/ Habitat & Wildlife Diversity/ Fragmentation	Cumulative effects from fire suppression and lack of vegetation management have resulted in a loss of important wildlife habitat and a decrease in vegetative diversity. Treatments are designed to improve forage, and road closures will reduce road densities, restore habitat, and decrease fragmentation.
Forest Insects & Disease	Silvicultural treatments have been designed to reduce the spread of mistletoe and pine beetle into the remaining healthy stands, which will allow them to become healthier and more resilient to future insect and disease attacks.
Watershed Restoration	A number of watershed restoration projects, as well as road closures, will take place under this proposal. This will address a number of the soil and water concerns in the area.

BACKGROUND

The Blackhall-McAnulty Analysis Area is located in the southeastern portion of the Sierra Madre Range. The analysis area encompasses approximately 47,000 acres, and is located on National Forest System lands approximately 10 miles southeast of Encampment, Wyoming, and 40 miles north of Walden, Colorado. There are an estimated 1,631 acres of private land in-holdings within the area. A legal description for the area is T.12, 13, and 14N., R.81, 82, & 83W., Carbon County, Wyoming.

The analysis area is predominantly forested, with parks or meadows of various sizes scattered across the landscape. General vegetation zones present in the analysis area include lodgepole pine forests, Englemann spruce-subalpine fir forests, alpine tundra, sagebrush-steppe, aspen, and riparian areas. Much of what is forested is dominated by stands of lodgepole pine poletimber and sawtimber. Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir dominate the higher elevations along the northwestern boundary of the area. Descending in elevation to the east, the lodgepole pine becomes more mixed with aspen. At the lower treeline at about 8,200 feet and on southerly aspects the lodgepole pine and aspen become mixed with scattered limber pine, and unique, relic stands of Douglas-fir, along with ponderosa pine.

In the central Rocky Mountain ecosystem, disturbance is the critical factor in maintaining co-existing species. Without disturbance, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce would replace disturbance dependent species such as lodgepole pine, aspen, and ponderosa pine. The presence of these three species at the lower and middle elevations of the analysis area is reflective of disturbance in the form of fire. Wildfire suppression began shortly after the creation of the Forest in 1902, in response to public concern regarding unchecked wildfires burning the area. The greatest effect fire suppression has had in the area has been the noticeable conversion of many aspen stands to subalpine fir and lodgepole pine. Most of the aspen stands in the vicinity are considered overmature, with the vast majority being well over 100 years old.

Since 1997, aerial surveys of the area conducted by the Forest Service have detected a marked increase in mountain pine beetle activity and subsequent mortality within stands dominated by lodgepole pine. With the current drought conditions and abundant lodgepole pine food source, indications are that epidemic levels will continue to spread in the Blackhall-McAnulty area.

Dwarf mistletoe is present in lodgepole pine in stands throughout the analysis area. Mistletoe is a parasitic plant that deforms trees, causes rot, and weakens a tree so that it is more susceptible to insects and disease. The Resource Information System (RIS) database estimates that 61% of the lodgepole stands within the Blackhall-McAnulty Analysis Area have low to high levels of mistletoe infestation. Associated with this, there are a number of forested stands where yearly tree mortality exceeds yearly tree growth. The presence of mature and overmature lodgepole pine with low to high levels of dwarf mistletoe provides a ready source of vulnerable trees for a growing mountain pine beetle epidemic to spread into.

The 2002 Bear Mountain South Fire alerted many landowners within and adjacent to the analysis area to the dangers wildfires present to private land and structures. As part of the National Fire Plan planning effort, Federal agencies have been directed to assess the level of wildfire risk, and the types and extent of treatments required to mitigate the risk.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DECISION (Alternative 2)

Designed to directly address the same purpose and need as the Proposed Action, Alternative 2 includes all the projects identified in the EIS under the Proposed Action, with fewer miles of road decommissioning. Road decommissioning in the eastern portion of the analysis area was reduced in an effort to respond to requests received during scoping, as well as on the Forest-wide Travel Management EA, for specific roads to remain open.

Commercial Timber Sales

A combination of harvest treatments will be used to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe and mountain pine beetle in area lodgepole pine stands, increase patch size of forested areas that have had past harvest, thin area stands to improve resiliency and reduce susceptibility to future disease and insect attack, salvage fire damaged trees, and to promote and maintain area aspen stands. Harvest units are situated predominantly within areas that have had past timber sale entries.

A preliminary analysis of the area has found that most of the acreage proposed for treatments would result in treating commercial-size trees (lodgepole greater than 5 inches in diameter). Past experience has shown that in such situations a multiproduct timber sale or a combination of commercial sales is the most efficient method to implement such treatments. Depending on size, each sale would take approximately 3 to 5 years to complete all treatments. Associated projects with the beetle treatments and multiproduct timber sale(s) would include: slash treatment, regeneration surveys, release and weed thinning, aspen enhancement for wildlife, interpretive signs, personal use firewood, noxious weed control, and native grass seeding.

Following are the silvicultural treatments and estimated acreages:

Table 2. Commercial Timber Sale Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Acres
Clearcut	234
Overstory Removal	35
Fire/Beetle Salvage	144
Sanitation/Salvage	613
Shelterwood - Preparatory Cut	866
Shelterwood - Seed Cut	155
Commercial Thinning	136
TOTAL ACRES	**2,183**

Note: The amounts (acres, miles, etc.) described in all action alternative tables and elsewhere in this document are based on the best information currently available. It is likely some of these described amounts will change slightly during implementation, due to adjustments made necessary as a result of field conditions not identified during reconnaissance and/or the implementation of mitigation measures.

Description of Proposed Treatments

CLEARCUT - The clearcut prescription has only been proposed in units that have lodgepole with high to moderate amounts of mistletoe adjacent to uninfected lodgepole stands or in stands where a new aspen stand is the objective. Consideration has also been given to using clearcutting to increase patch size of areas that have had past harvesting. Under this treatment all merchantable lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce is harvested (100%). Portions that have existing healthy regeneration will be treated with an overstory removal harvest. If a site has good aspen potential, then consideration will be given to using prescribed fire to burn the logging slash following harvest. If not broadcast burned, depending on slash amounts, either scattering and/or piling and burning will be used to treat slash.

OVERSTORY REMOVAL - The overstory removal prescription has been proposed in units that have a predominantly lodgepole overstory with high to moderate amounts of mistletoe over a lodgepole, fir, and spruce seedling/sapling understory. Along with reducing the spread of mistletoe from the lodgepole overstory to the lodgepole understory, consideration has also been given to using overstory removals to increase patch size of areas that have had past harvesting. Due to inadequate existing regeneration in some portions of these units, there will be areas (most less than an acre in size) that will resemble a clearcut following harvest. Under this treatment all merchantable lodgepole, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce will be harvested (80%). Slash will be lopped and scattered.

FIRE/BEETLE SALVAGE – Proposed for portions of the Bear Mountain South Fire area that are suitable for timber management, under this treatment, 20-30% of the existing overstory that has been damaged by the fire or with known active pockets of beetles will be salvaged to improve the health of the stand, reduce the build-up of forest fuels, and to create conditions for new regeneration. It is anticipated that this treatment will concentrate on trees not killed outright by the fire. Most of the trees killed by the fire will be left as snags for dependent wildlife. Slash is typically lopped and scattered.

SANITATION/SALVAGE - Under this treatment, 20-30% of the existing overstory will be salvaged to improve the health of the stand. Proposed for areas of forest that have had past pre-1950 partial harvest with known active pockets of beetles, an emphasis will be made on harvesting merchantable lodgepole that is either dead, beetle infested, with moderate to high amounts of mistletoe, and/or of poor form. Consideration will be given to treating portions of these units non-commercially in areas with low commercial volume. Slash is typically lopped and scattered.

SHELTERWOOD – PREPARATORY CUT - Under this first step of an anticipated three-step shelterwood, 20 to 30% of the existing overstory will be salvaged to improve the health of the stand, improve wind firmness of stands, and to begin opening up stands for new and existing regeneration. Proposed for areas of forest that are dominated by mixed conifer or spruce-fir, an emphasis will be made on harvesting merchantable lodgepole that is either dead, beetle infested, with moderate to high amounts of mistletoe, and/or of poor form. Slash is typically lopped and scattered.

SHELTERWOOD – SEED CUT - Under this second step of a three-step shelterwood, 40 to 50% of the overstory will be removed, retaining the healthiest trees with the best form to act as a seed source. An emphasis will be made on harvesting merchantable lodgepole that is either dead, beetle infested, with moderate to high amounts of mistletoe, and/or of poor form. Along with improving the resiliency of the stand to insects and disease, this treatment provides growing space for new and existing regeneration in the understory. Slash will be lopped and scattered.

COMMERCIAL THINNING - Proposed for younger lodgepole pine post and pole stands, under this treatment, 40% of the existing lodgepole overstory will be thinned to promote a healthier stand and to produce future sawtimber. Thinning will be designed to promote and/or maintain stands as potential goshawk nesting or foraging habitat. Slash is typically lopped and scattered.

The existing road system of both open and closed roads, along with temporary road construction, will provide access for the proposal. To better address soil, water, and wildlife concerns, all specified and temporary road reconstruction and construction needed for the timber sale proposal will use minimum (ground-disturbing) standards for construction. To discourage public use of these roads during project implementation, consideration will be given to gating these roads off the current open road system. Following the completion of the proposal, all temporary roads will be obliterated and closed. All Forest System roads currently closed will be physically closed to motorized vehicle use following project completion, retaining their templates for future management entries.

Following are the estimated road reconstruction and construction totals:

Table 3. Roads

Type of Road	New Construction	Reconstruction Existing	Culverts	Total Miles
Specified	0.0 miles	6.2 miles	5	6.2 miles
Temporary	2.9 miles	3.7 miles	5	6.6 miles
TOTAL	**2.9 miles**	**9.9 miles**	**10 culverts**	**12.8 miles**

Prescribed Fire

Under this proposal, predominantly non-forested areas dominated by sagebrush and bitterbrush in the vicinity of Cunningham and Holroyd Parks will be broadcast burned during the spring to create a mosaic of shrub, forbs, and grass age classes, to improve forage for big game and livestock, and to encourage new aspen and ponderosa pine regeneration in areas where present. It is anticipated that only a minimal amount of fire line will be required using area two-track roads and forested areas, with snow serving as the primary firebreaks for the burn. A small portion of this proposal falls within the Bear Mountain Inventoried Roadless Area. The objective of the burn is to create (maximum) 50% mix mosaic between unburned and burned areas. Areas with cheatgrass and/or areas that were already burned in the recent past within the identified burn polygons will be eliminated from the final burn plan.

Table 4. Prescribed Fire Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Acres
Broadcast Burn	2,604
TOTAL ACRES	**2,604**

Reduce Hazardous Fuels Adjacent to Private Land

The 2002 Bear Mountain South Fire alerted many landowners within and adjacent to the analysis area to the dangers wildfires present to private land and structures. Under this proposal, forested areas on the National Forest directly adjacent to private land and structures in the vicinity of Jerry Park and along the Forest Boundary in the Skyline Ridge area will be treated through a combination of commercial and service contracts to reduce hazardous fuels. Best described as a boundary treatment, under this treatment, diseased, dead standing (20-30% of overstory), down dead trees, ladder fuels, and slash within 100 to 200' of the National Forest boundary adjacent to private land where there are existing structures will be cleared to create a fuelbreak that would increase the controllability of a potential wildfire burning from Forest onto private land and/or from private land onto the Forest.

The end result of this treatment will be an area forested with scattered live trees, with little or no slash or dead trees present. Plans are to require whole tree skidding in all proposed fuels treatment units. Cut trees in these boundary areas will be yarded to landings where the unmerchantable slash will be piled. Piles generated by whole tree skidding and/or unit piling will subsequently be burned during fall and winter months after there is adequate snowfall. In the case of the Skyline Ridge proposal, due to the current access, all or most access for treatments on the National Forest will require the adjacent private landowners permission and the granting of temporary access to the Forest Service and/or contractors across the private land to areas identified for treatment. Without this permission and access, it is doubtful this portion of the project will ever take place.

Table 5. Hazardous Fuels Reduction Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Acres
Boundary Treatment	116
TOTAL ACRES	**116**

Precommercial Thinning

There are many second-growth stands of predominantly lodgepole pine and aspen (seedling/sapling in size) within regenerated clearcuts that are experiencing a slowing of growth due to overcrowding. If left unaltered, this overstocked condition would result in stands with reduced vigor, increased mortality, and greater susceptibility to insects. The stands will be hand-thinned with chainsaws to promote a healthier, faster growing, beetle and disease-resistant future stand. All proposed thinning units are outside of areas mapped as Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU). It is anticipated that this thinning project will be accomplished through service contracts.

Table 6. Precommercial Thinning Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Acres
Precommercial Thinning	1,000
TOTAL ACRES	**1,000**

Travel Management

Another project considered under this analysis was the implementation of Phase 2 of the *Forest-Wide Travel Management Environmental Assessment* (October 16, 2000) within the project area. Phase 2 analysis includes determinations on whether or not unplanned and unmanaged user-created roads and trails will be added to the Forest Transportation System, whether or not additional motorized opportunities should be developed, or if existing Forest Transportation System routes should be opened or closed. A roads analysis identified a number of roads within the project area requiring maintenance or closure to reduce soil erosion and sediment entering area creeks. High open road densities in the eastern portion of the area could be degrading wildlife security areas and habitat effectiveness in big game winter range areas.

Road decommissioning results in the deactivation of a road currently on the National Forest road system. There are roads no longer needed for permanent access as the result of evolving forest land management allocations and current access needs. Decommissioning includes treatments that range from blocking or signing the entrance, scattering limbs and rocks on the roadbed, revegetation, water barring, removing road fills, reestablishing drainage-ways, and pulling back unstable shoulders--to full obliteration by recontouring slopes. On certain roads, existing culverts will be removed. To identify roads to be decommissioned, the interdisciplinary team reviewed the entire road system in the study area. This decision approves the roads displayed on Map 1. Any unplanned, user-created roads not depicted on Map 1 are not part of the road system and will be decommissioned.

Some minor changes were made to Alternative 2 road closures with this decision. These changes were necessary to reflect more accurate mapping and to respond to public comments suggesting more efficient recreational access (Map 2). This decision adds an additional 2.2 miles of road decommissioning. *Alternative 2 in the FEIS included 29.3 miles of road decommissioning.

Table 7. Road Decommissioning Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Miles
Road Decommissioning	31.5
TOTAL MILES	**31.5***

Big Creek Trail

The current western terminus of this non-motorized trail will be moved to a better location, where a trailhead with adequate vehicle parking and signing will be established. The central trailhead on the 498.2A road will also be improved and a trail bridge will be installed over the Middle Fork of Big Creek and another over the South Fork Big Creek to facilitate horse, foot, and mountain bike use.

Watershed Restoration

A number of watershed restoration projects have been identified for implementation within the analysis area to address soil, water, native flora, and fauna concerns. These projects include:

- Increase ditch relief pipes along sections of the area's major open roads to reduce routing of sediment to stream channels.
- In the McAnulty drainage on existing **closed** roads: waterbar roads where needed to reduce erosion and sedimentation of McAnulty Creek. Remove log culverts, several of which have already failed. Remove sawdust piles on the streambanks and associated wetlands area along McAnulty Creek in the vicinity of an old mill site. All activities would be implemented after receiving approval from the State Historic Preservation Office.
- Remove mine spoils, re-establish and stabilize stream channel and revegetated disturbed area adjacent to the stream channel at the head of Turnbull Gulch.
- Erosion problems along Highline Ditch are being addressed through routine special use permit administration and repair work was initiated during the summer of 2003.
- Treatment and restoration of areas currently infested with non-native cheatgrass.

MITIGATION

In addition to Forest Plan standards and guidelines designed to mitigate adverse impacts, the interdisciplinary team identified design features that will be applied to reduce or prevent undesirable effects resulting from management activities. See FEIS pages 33-38 for specific mitigation measures.

MONITORING COMMON TO ALL ACTION ALTERNATIVES

Monitoring is designed to:

- Determine if assumptions made for effects analysis were correct
- Validate the accuracy of models
- Determine if resource objectives are being achieved and verify implementation
- Assess the degree of practical effects

Monitoring will be done to ensure that Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines are met where they may be potentially affected by the alternative selected for implementation. (For more detailed information on these monitoring items see FEIS pages 39-40).

The following table displays the anticipated implementation of the various monitoring items:

Table 21. Monitoring

Item to be Monitored	Responsible for Monitoring	Frequency/Timing of Monitoring	Reason for Monitoring
Goshawk Nest Locations (and other raptors)	Wildlife Biologist, Layout Forester, Marking Crew, Sale Administrator	During Sale Layout, Marking and Implementation	Find new or previously undiscovered nest locations.
Water Quality - Skid Trails	Timber Sale Administrator and Hydrologist	During and Following Sale Operations	Ensure that BMPs are being implemented and are effective.
Water Quality – Effectiveness of road decommissioning.	Hydrologist	At the end of the first season after decommissioning, and at 1, 3 and 5 years after road decommissioning, or until the road has stabilized and revegetated.	Ensure that BMPs are being implemented and are effective.

Table 21. Monitoring (continued)

Item to be Monitored	Responsible for Monitoring	Frequency/Timing of Monitoring	Reason for Monitoring
Water Quality - Turbidity increases due to culvert removal.	Hydrologist	During culvert removal and stream channel restoration.	Increase our knowledge of how to reduce sediment during activities occurring within stream channels and document compliance with State of Wyoming Water Quality Standards.
Insect and Disease Trends	Regional Office and Forest Staff	Annual	Annual infection/infestation monitoring flight will track trends of insects and disease in the analysis area.
Harvest units, prescribed burns, and any other sites where native vegetation cover is removed and/or bare soil is exposed.	Range Conservationist	At least the first five years after treatment/Long-term.	To detect if shrub regeneration is not occurring as planned (and why) and to detect cheatgrass and other weeds at the early invasion stage.
Selected "common trout" populations	Fisheries Biologists	One year following the completion of harvest.	To determine any changes in relative abundance.
Management Indicator Species	Wildlife Biologist	On-going	To track changes in populations and habitats Forest-wide.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

Original Proposed Action

The original proposed action is identical to the selected Alternative 2, except proposed to decommission 38.6 miles of road.

Table 8. Original Proposed Action – Treatment Summary

Commercial Treatment	Est. Acres
Clearcut	234
Overstory Removal	35
Fire/Beetle Salvage	144
Sanitation/Salvage	613
Shelterwood - Preparatory Cut	866
Shelterwood - Seed Cut	155
Commercial Thinning	136
Total	**2,183**
Other Treatment Acres	
Broadcast Burn	2,604
Boundary Treatment	116
Precommercial Thinning	1,000

Table 9. Original Proposed Action - Roads

Type of Road	New Construction	Reconstruction Existing	Culverts	Total Miles
Specified	0.0 miles	6.2 miles	5	6.2 miles
Temporary	2.9 miles	3.7 miles	5	6.6 miles
TOTAL	**2.9 miles**	**9.9 miles**	**10 culverts**	**12.8 miles**

Table 10. Original Proposed Action – Road Decommissioning Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Miles
Road Decommissioning	38.6
TOTAL MILES	**38.6**

Alternative 1 - No Action

Under the No Action alternative there would be no treatment to the vegetation in the area. In most environmental analyses the no action alternative represents a static, relatively unchanging baseline of the analysis area's existing condition that can be used to compare the potential effects of the action alternatives. In the case of the Blackhall-McAnulty analysis, the no action alternative could have major implications to the timber resource in the area. Alternative 1 would do the least during this entry in moving the vicinity's forests towards the desired future condition for the area. By dropping all proposed timber harvest and prescribed burning, this alternative would allow to continue the conversion of low and middle elevation areas that were once dominated by aspen, and in some cases ponderosa pine--to subalpine fir and lodgepole pine stands, reducing the biodiversity of these areas. Non-forested areas would continue to convert to heavy shrub communities, reducing forage opportunities for livestock and area wildlife.

By not moving forward with the proposed timber harvest, boundary treatment, and precommercial thinning, the parasitic plant dwarf mistletoe would continue to spread unchecked through the area's predominantly lodgepole pine stands and into adjacent regenerated clearcuts, infecting the existing sapling and poletimber size lodgepole, weakening trees, making them more susceptible to future disease and/or insect attack—such as mountain pine beetle. Mountain pine beetle would continue to spread unchecked through the area, causing mortality within the vicinity's lodgepole, ponderosa, and limber pine stands. As with pine beetle, western balsam bark beetle would be allowed to spread unchecked through the area, causing additional mortality to area subalpine fir. Tree mortality due to these bark beetles will increase wildfire potential in the area.

As shown by the 2002 Bear Mountain South Fire, under the right conditions and with an ignition source, a sizeable fire can occur in the area. If another wildfire were to occur, the presence of existing lodgepole pine and subalpine fir dead and dying trees would allow the fire to easily transition in to a crown fire or stand-replacing fire. In most cases fir exist as "ladder" fuels that would allow a potential wildfire to burn up into the crowns of the predominantly lodgepole pine stands. A future crown fire could be very detrimental to the few remaining ponderosa pine in the area, possibly killing them.

Although annual road and periodic ditch maintenance would still occur under this alternative under normal program of work, the other watershed restoration projects identified for the area such as the removal of mine spoils and cheatgrass treatments would not occur. Other identified projects such as the Big Creek Trail improvements and Travel Management road decommissioning would also not be implemented.

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative) Refer to description of the decision on ROD-(pages) 7-12.

Alternative 3

Designed to directly address the significant issues of clearcutting and past cumulative effects, Alternative 3 differs from the Proposed Action and Alternative 2 in that it drops all proposed clearcutting and reduces the amount of timber harvest and associated specified and temporary road construction and reconstruction. This alternative also drops all proposed fire salvage within the Bear Mountain South Burn area. Though it still includes fuels reduction around Jerry Park (74 acres), Alternative 3 drops the Skyline boundary treatment and all precommercial thinning. Alternative 3 includes the entire prescribed burn proposal, road decommissioning, and all the proposed watershed restoration projects included under the Proposed Action.

Table 11. Alternative 3 – Treatment Summary

Commercial Treatment	Est. Acres
Clearcut	0
Overstory Removal	0
Fire/Beetle Salvage	0
Sanitation/Salvage	426
Shelterwood - Preparatory Cut	268
Shelterwood - Seed Cut	0
Commercial Thinning	49
Total	**743**
Other Treatment Acres	
Broadcast Burn	2,604
Boundary Treatment	74
Precommercial Thinning	0

Table 12. Alternative 3 - Roads

Type of Road	New Construction	Reconstruction Existing	Culverts	Total Miles
Specified	0.0 miles	2.0 miles	2	2.0 miles
Temporary	0.9 miles	2.1 miles	2	3.0 miles
TOTAL	**0.9 miles**	**4.1 miles**	**4 culverts**	**5.0 miles**

Table 13. Alternative 3 – Road Decommissioning Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Miles
Road Decommissioning	38.6
TOTAL MILES	**38.6**

Alternative 4

Designed to directly address the significant issues of cumulative effects and watershed restoration, Alternative 4 only includes the entire prescribed burn proposal, travel management—road decommissioning, and watershed restoration proposals included under the Proposed Action.

Table 14. Alternative 4 – Treatment Summary

Commercial Treatment	Est. Total Acres
Clearcut	0
Overstory Removal	0
Fire/Beetle Salvage	0
Sanitation/Salvage	0
Shelterwood - Preparatory Cut	0
Shelterwood - Seed Cut	0
Commercial Thinning	0
Total	**0**
Other Treatment Acres	
Broadcast Burn	2,604
Boundary Treatment	0
Precommercial Thinning	0

Table 15. Alternative 4 - Roads

Type of Road	New Construction	Reconstruction Existing	Culverts	Total Miles
Specified	0 miles	0 miles	0	0 miles
Temporary	0 miles	0 miles	0	0 miles
TOTAL	**0 miles**	**0 miles**	**0 culverts**	**0 miles**

Table 16. Alternative 4 - Road Decommissioning Summary

Treatment	Est. Total Miles
Road Decommissioning	38.6
TOTAL MILES	**38.6**

COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

This section provides a summary of the effects of implementing each alternative. Information in the table is focused on activities and effects where different levels of effects or outputs can be distinguished quantitatively or qualitatively among alternatives.

Table 17. Treatments by Alternative

COMMERCIAL TREATMENT/ ACRES	Proposed Action	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Clearcut	234	0	234	0	0
Overstory Removal	35	0	35	0	0
Fire/Beetle Salvage	144	0	144	0	0
Sanitation/Salvage	613	0	613	426	0
Shelterwood – Preparatory Cut	866	0	866	268	0
Shelterwood – Seed Cut	155	0	155	0	0
Commercial Thinning	136	0	136	49	0
TOTAL ACRES	**2,183**	**0**	**2,183**	**743**	**0**
OTHER TREATMENT/ ACRES					
Broadcast Burn	2,604	0	2,604	2,604	2,604
Boundary Treatment	116	0	116	74	0
Precommercial Thinning	1,000	0	1,000	0	0

Table 18. Road Construction by Alternative

Roads	Proposed Action	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Specified Construction	0	0	0	0	0
Specified Reconstruction	6.2	0	6.2	2.0	0
Temporary Construction	2.9	0	2.9	0.9	0
Temporary Reconstruction	3.7	0	3.7	2.1	0
TOTAL MILES	**12.8**	**0**	**12.8**	**5.0**	**0**

Table 19. Road Decommissioning by Alternative

Roads	Proposed Action	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Miles of Road Proposed for Decommissioning	38.6	0	31.5*	38.6	38.6

*Alternative 2 in the FEIS included 29.3 miles of road decommissioning.

Watershed improvement projects are consistent across all action alternatives.

Table 20. Comparison of Alternatives

Purpose and Need	Proposed Action	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Vegetative Diversity	Designed to address, 234 acres of clearcut, 35 acres of overstory removal, 144 acres of fire salvage, along with the broadcast burn will promote conditions for new aspen regeneration. Sanitation/salvage treatment will maintain existing aspen.	With 0 acres of treatment, no action will allow decline in area aspen and vegetation diversity to continue.	Designed to address, 234 acres of clearcut, 35 acres of overstory removal, 144 acres of fire salvage, along with the broadcast burn will promote conditions for new aspen regeneration. Sanitation/salvage treatment will maintain existing aspen.	Broadcast burn will promote conditions for new aspen regeneration. Sanitation/salvage treatment will maintain existing aspen.	Broadcast burn will promote conditions for new aspen regeneration.
Natural Patch Size	Designed to address, all harvest treatments are directly adjacent to areas that have had past harvest. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	With no harvest treatment or road decommissioning, no action will allow natural succession to continue.	All harvest treatments are directly adjacent to areas that have had past harvest. Includes 7.1 miles less road decommissioning.	66% less treatments than Proposed Action and Alt. 2. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	0 acres of harvest treatment. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.
Forest Health & Resiliency	Designed to address, all proposed harvest treatments and precommercial thinning will improve forest health and resiliency.	With 0 acres of treatment, no action will allow area forest health and resiliency to continue to decline.	Designed to address, all proposed harvest treatments and precommercial thinning will improve forest health and resiliency.	With no precommercial thinning and 66% less harvest treatments than Proposed Action and Alt. 2, Alt. 3 will do less to address concern.	With 0 acres of treatment, Alt. 4 will allow area forest health and resiliency to continue to decline.
Providing a Flow of Timber	Designed to address, all proposed harvest treatments will produce commercial volume.	With 0 acres of harvest treatment, no action will produce no commercial volume.	Designed to address, all proposed harvest treatments will produce commercial volume.	With 66% less harvest treatments than Proposed Action and Alt. 2, Alt. 3 would produce the least amount of commercial volume.	With 0 acres of harvest treatment, Alt. 4 will produce no commercial volume.
Wildland Urban Interface	Designed to address, includes 116 acres of boundary treatment directly adjacent to private land with structures.	With 0 acres of boundary treatment, no action does not address concern.	Designed to address, includes 116 acres of boundary treatment directly adjacent to private land with structures.	Includes 74 acres of boundary treatment directly adjacent to private land with structures.	With 0 acres of boundary treatment, Alt. 4 does not address concern.
Watershed Restoration	Designed to address, includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	With no Watershed Restoration projects, no action does not address concern.	Includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes 7.1 miles less road decommissioning.	Designed to address, includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	Designed to address, includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.

Table 20. Comparison of Alternatives (continued)

Significant Issue	Proposed Action	Alternative 1 No Action	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Alternative 4
Clearcutting	Includes 234 acres of clearcutting (11% of entire timber sale proposal).	Designed to address issue, includes no clearcutting.	Includes 234 acres of clearcutting (11% of entire timber sale proposal).	Designed to address issue, includes no clearcutting.	Designed to address issue, includes no clearcutting.
Cumulative Effects/ Habitat & Wildlife Diversity/ Fragmentation	Proposal found to be consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	With no treatments and road decommissioning, no action will allow natural succession to continue.	Proposal found to be consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Includes 7.1 miles less road decommissioning.	With 66% less harvest treatments than Proposed Action and Alt. 2, Alt. 3 is consistent with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	Except for the broadcast burn area Alt. 4 will allow natural succession to continue. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.
Forest Insects & Disease	Designed to address, all proposed harvest treatments and precommercial thinning will improve forest health and resiliency.	With 0 acres of treatment, no action will allow area forest health and resiliency to continue to decline.	Designed to address, all proposed harvest treatments and precommercial thinning will improve forest health and resiliency.	With no precommercial thinning and 66% less harvest treatments than Proposed Action and Alt. 2, Alt. 3 will do less to address concern.	With 0 acres of treatment, Alt. 4 will allow area forest health and resiliency to continue to decline.
Watershed Restoration	Designed to address, includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	With no Watershed Restoration projects, no action will not address this concern.	Designed to address, includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes 7.1 miles less road decommissioning.	Designed to address, includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.	Designed to address, includes all proposed Watershed Restoration projects. Includes all proposed road decommissioning.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED STUDY

Original Proposed Action

A number of potential harvest units were dropped from the original proposed action to better address Forest Plan standards and guidelines for big game thermal cover, designated old growth, and to prevent any conflicts with known northern goshawk nests.

Uneven-aged Management

This alternative would only use selective harvesting or uneven-aged management to treat potential units within the area. Lodgepole and aspen typically regenerate new even-aged stands following a stand-replacing event such as a wildfire. Although uneven-aged management can be used to promote Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir, which typically grow in uneven-aged conditions, this treatment would create potentially unnatural conditions within the area's current even-aged stands of lodgepole and aspen. Uneven-aged management within the area's predominantly lodgepole pine stands would promote and speed up the invasion of other conifer species such as subalpine fir. Implementation of uneven-aged harvest prescriptions within mistletoed lodgepole stands would increase the spread of mistletoe from the overstory to younger lodgepole in the understory. Therefore, this treatment was dropped from consideration in lodgepole and aspen stands. The various shelterwood treatments proposed for mixed conifer and spruce-fir dominated stands under the proposal will maintain and create uneven age conditions in treated stands.

Prescribed Burning

Consideration was given to just using prescribed burning to broadcast burn forested and non-forested portions of the area—including areas identified for fuels treatment and/or timber harvest, to promote aspen and vegetation diversity. Though 2,604 acres of predominantly non-forested areas are proposed to be broadcast burned under all the action alternatives, in looking at the rest of the vicinity it was felt it was not feasible to burn the forested portions. For burning to be effective in promoting disturbance dependent species--such as aspen, it would need to be a crown or stand-replacing fire. This type of high intensity fire tends to create its own wind and to create spot fires sometimes miles from the main body of fire. The risk of adverse environmental effects and the risk of not being able to confine a prescribed fire to the treatment area make this alternative unfeasible. Though the use of fire(s) would be the best means to replicate natural disturbance and to encourage disturbance-dependent plant communities, potential detrimental effects to heritage resources, soils, water quality, stream channel stability, wildlife habitat, and area private land make this alternative unfeasible. As demonstrated by the 2002 Bear Mountain South Fire, it took the efforts of slurry bombers, helicopter water drops, bulldozers, hundreds of firefighters, and an expenditure of hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring this stand-replacing, crown fire under control.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Blackhall-McAnulty analysis combines several projects that were previously identified as separate proposals: The Blackhall Timber Sale, the McAnulty/Beaver Creek Timber Sale, the McAnulty 2 Fuels Management project, and the Sierra Madre Travel Management Analysis. Scoping had been done on both Blackhall and McAnulty/Beaver Creek Timber Sales in 1998 and 1999. Scoping was re-initiated on this expanded project on April 10, 2003. The Colorado portion of the McAnulty/Beaver Creek Timber Sale (Beaver Creek) will be analyzed separately at a later date. Because of the degree of controversy and possibility of significant effect of the project, it was decided that an Environmental Impact Statement would be prepared. The Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on June 11, 2003. The NOI asked for public comment on the proposal from June 11 through July 10, 2003. The proposal was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) quarterly reports as one combined project, in January 2003, and each subsequent quarterly report.

Using the comments from the public, other agencies, and tribes, the interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address. On September 22, 2003, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was mailed to the appropriate Federal agencies and to those who had requested the document, and on September 22, 2003 was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency. A Notice of Availability (NOA) was published in the *Federal Register* on October 3, 2003, requesting public comment on the Draft EIS. A legal notice was published in the *Rawlins Daily Times* announcing the availability of the document and requesting public comment. Ninety-three responses were received. Responses to the comment letters can be found in Appendix B of the FEIS.

The significant issues of concern included those listed below (see FEIS pages 15-16).

Clearcutting

There is concern over the use of the clearcut treatment and the cumulative effects past clearcutting, partial cutting, logging slash, and associated roads have had on other area resources such as water and wildlife.

Cumulative Effects/Habitat and Wildlife Diversity/Fragmentation

Portions of the analysis area provide winter range, calving, and security areas for elk.

Thermal cover for big game is below Forest Plan standards for the area.

Portions of the area have been heavily harvested and had major road systems constructed in the past. Cumulatively area harvest and roads have negatively altered the aesthetics of the area, creating unnatural vegetation patterns, affecting area wildlife habitat effectiveness, and contributing sediment to area streams.

Forest Insects and Diseases

Aerial and on-the-ground surveys have found that there has been a recent increase in mountain pine beetle activity and associated lodgepole pine mortality in the vicinity.

Forested stand inventories have found that the parasitic plant, dwarf mistletoe, is infecting a high percentage of lodgepole pine stands in the analysis area.

Beetles and mistletoe are natural components of the area Forests that should be allowed to progress unchecked.

Watershed Restoration

There are a number of roads across the project area where poor alignment, lack of gravel, and poorly designed and maintained drainage structures are allowing sediment from these roads to enter area streams.

Other open roads and road densities may be affecting wildlife habitat effectiveness in the area, especially in areas identified as winter range.

To address these concerns, the Forest Service created the alternatives described previously.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Blackhall-McAnulty Analysis Area includes a number of management areas that were assigned certain management prescriptions and associated standards and guidelines (see FEIS pages 9-10). A Forest Plan consistency analysis was completed for Alternative 2 and the other alternatives to determine their consistency with Forest Plan General Direction and Standards and Guidelines. The analysis found that the proposal was consistent with all 1985 Medicine Bow Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines.

This proposal has been compared to the selected Alternative (D FEIS) of the Revised Medicine Bow Forest Plan, which was approved on December 29, 2003 (40 CFR 1506.4). The analysis found that this decision is consistent with management area direction and Standards and Guidelines of the Revision (see Project Record).

Alternative 2 complies with other laws and regulations such as the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. The Best Management Practices will be applied to meet State water quality standards. In accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), this project was submitted for formal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on August 26, 2003. The final Biological Opinion, received on January 23, 2004, confirmed that "the vegetative treatments are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Canada lynx and that no critical habitat for Canada lynx will be affected" and that the proposed action "may affect but is not likely to adversely affect" bald eagles. A "may adversely impact individuals, but not likely to result in a loss of viability on the Planning Area, nor cause a trend to federal listing or a loss of species viability rangewide" determination has been made for all sensitive fish, wildlife and plant species (see Chapter 3 of the FEIS).

State of Wyoming storm water discharge permit for construction activities from WYDEQ is required for non-silvicultural projects which have ground disturbance of 1 acre or greater. The road decommissioning and watershed restoration projects included in this decision may require a permit. If a permit is required, an "authorization to discharge storm water associated with construction activity under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)" will be obtained prior to any ground disturbing activities.

All vegetative management proposals comply with the requirements listed at 36 CFR 219.27 which establishes the minimum specific management to be met in accomplishing goals and objectives for the National Forest System. The interdisciplinary team considered these requirements when designing the projects and concluded that the proposed projects will meet minimum specific management requirements.

Alternative 2 complies with 36 CFR 219.27(c)(3) which assures that the technology and knowledge exists to adequately restock the lands within five years after final harvest. The alternative also complies with 36 CFR 219.16(a)(2)(iii) which assures that all even-aged stands scheduled to be harvested during the planning period will generally have reached the culmination of mean annual increment of growth. Alternative 2 complies with 16 USC 1604 (k), which requires clearcutting to be certified as the optimum harvest method (see Vegetation specialist report in Project Record).

I find that my decision is consistent with the following:

1. Laws, Regulations And Policies

I considered all of the relevant laws and regulations including, but not limited to:

Organic Act of 1897
Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960
Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974
Clean Air Act, as amended
Clean Water Act
Protection of Wetlands Executive Order 11990
Endangered Species Act
National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended
Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979
Native American Religious Freedom Act
National Environmental Policy Act
National Forest Management Act of 1976
Americans with Disabilities Act

2. Effects On The Environment

The environmental effects of implementing my decision are found in Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

Furthermore, I considered the effects and consequences disclosed in the Final EIS and public comment received during the public involvement process. I find that my decision, with the applied mitigation measures, meets all applicable laws, regulations, and policies, fulfills the purpose and need for the action, and is in the public's interest. All practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted.

I have also concluded that implementation of this decision would result in a sustainable harvest of timber and would not exceed, by itself or cumulatively, the allowable sale quantity (ASQ) as defined by the 1985 Medicine Bow Forest Plan.

3. Identification Of Environmentally Preferable Alternative

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable [Section 101 NEPA; 40 CFR 1505.2(b)]. The environmentally preferred alternative is not necessarily the alternative that will be implemented, and it does not have to meet the underlying Purpose and Need for the project. It does, however, have to cause the least damage to the physical and biological environment, and best protect, preserve, and enhance historical, cultural, and natural resources.

I have determined that both the Proposed Action and Alternative 2 are the environmentally preferred alternatives because these alternatives ensure the future health of the land by providing appropriate opportunities for active management to work in concert with natural ecological processes. The maintenance of forest health and the physical resources is attained while securing the viability of plant and animal species into the future.

IMPLEMENTATION

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Federal regulations at 36 CFR 215, "Notice, Comment, and Appeal Procedures for National Forest System Projects and Activities." Appeals, including attachments, must be in writing and filed (regular mail, fax, e-mail, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the Appeal Deciding Officer (§215.8) within 45 days following the date of publication of a legal notice of this decision in the *Rawlins Daily Times*. The publication date of the legal notice in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal (§215.15 (a)). Those wishing to appeal should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Where to File an Appeal

USDA Forest Service
Region 2, Rocky Mountain Region
Attn: Appeal Deciding Officer
POB 25127
Lakewood CO 80225-25127

Delivery:
USDA Forest Service
Region 2, Rocky Mountain Region
Attn: Appeal Deciding Officer
740 Simms Street
Golden CO 80401-4720

Fax: 303-275-5134

Hours: Mon-Fri 7:30 am-4:30 pm

E-mail: appeals-rocky-mountain-regional-office@fs.fed.us

(Acceptable formats for electronic appeals are: rtf, pdf, or word.)

For electronically mailed comments or appeals, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgment from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgment of the receipt of the comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.13(a), only those individuals or organizations who submitted substantive comments during the comment period may file an appeal. It is an appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the Responsible Official's decision should be reversed (§215.14 (a)). At a minimum, an appeal must include the following (§215.14(b)):

1. Appellant's name and address (§215.2), with a telephone number, if available;
2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
3. When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant (§215.2) and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
4. The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;

5. The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either this part or part 251, subpart C (§215.11 (d));
6. Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
7. Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
8. Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
9. How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

Notices of Appeal that do not meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14 will be dismissed.

Implementation Date

If no appeal is received, implementation of the decision may begin on, but not before, the 5th business day following the close of the appeal-filing period (36 CFR 215.15). If an appeal is received, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of appeal disposition (§215.2).

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact:

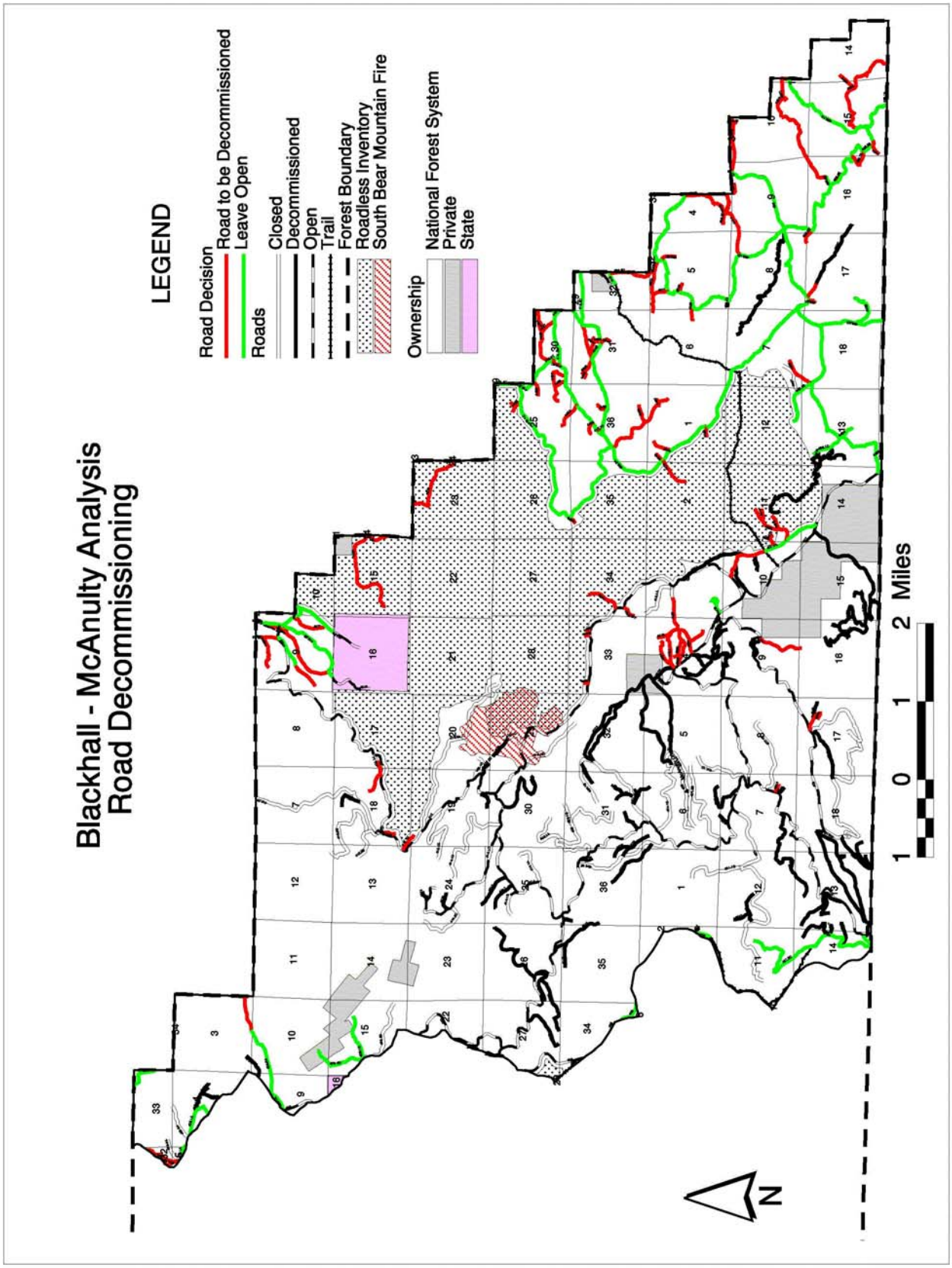
Terry DeLay, ID Team Leader
Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District
PO Box 249
Saratoga WY 82331
(307) 326-2518

/s/ Scott G. Armentrout — February 9, 2004

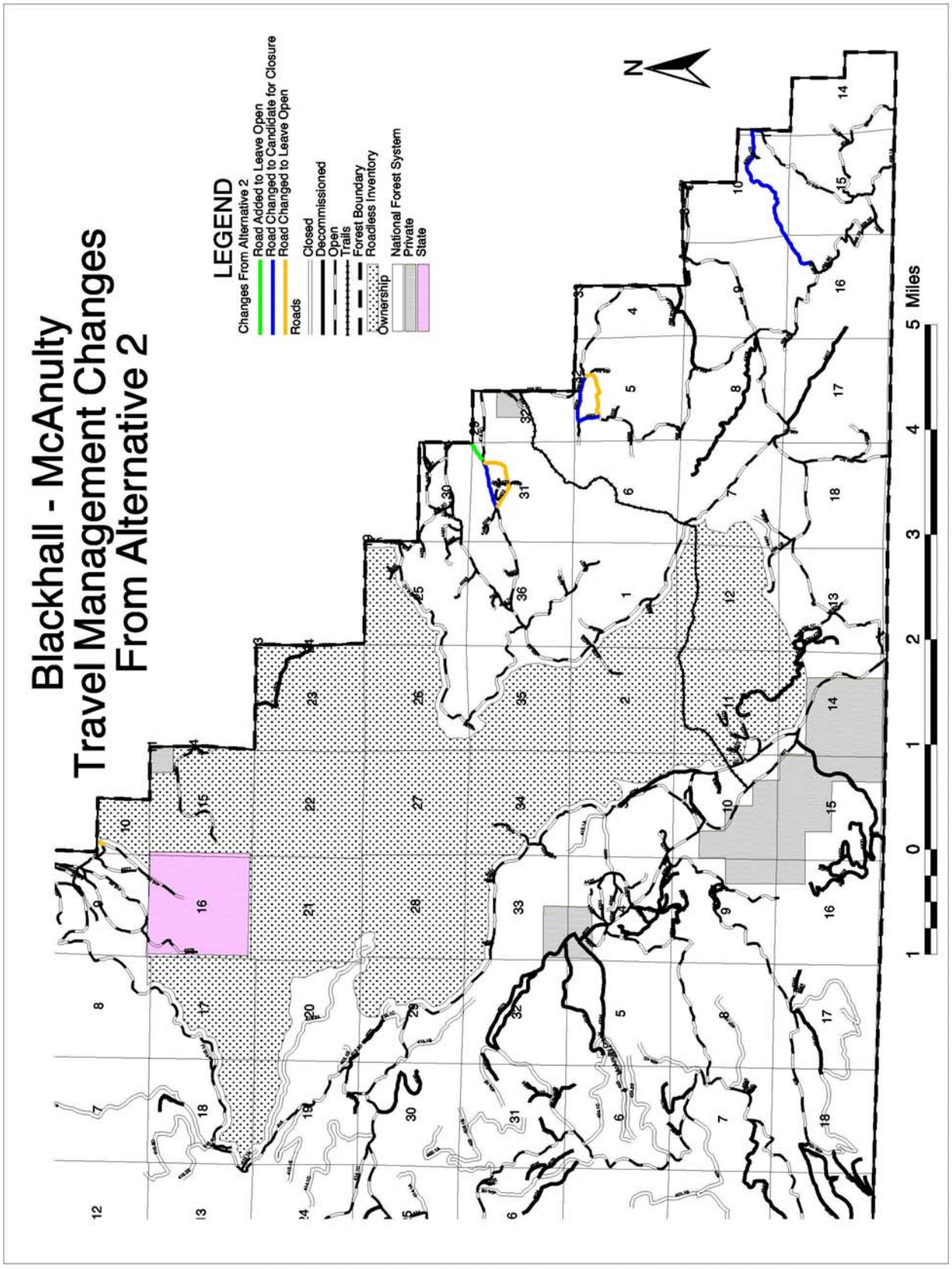
SCOTT G. ARMENTROUT — *DATE*

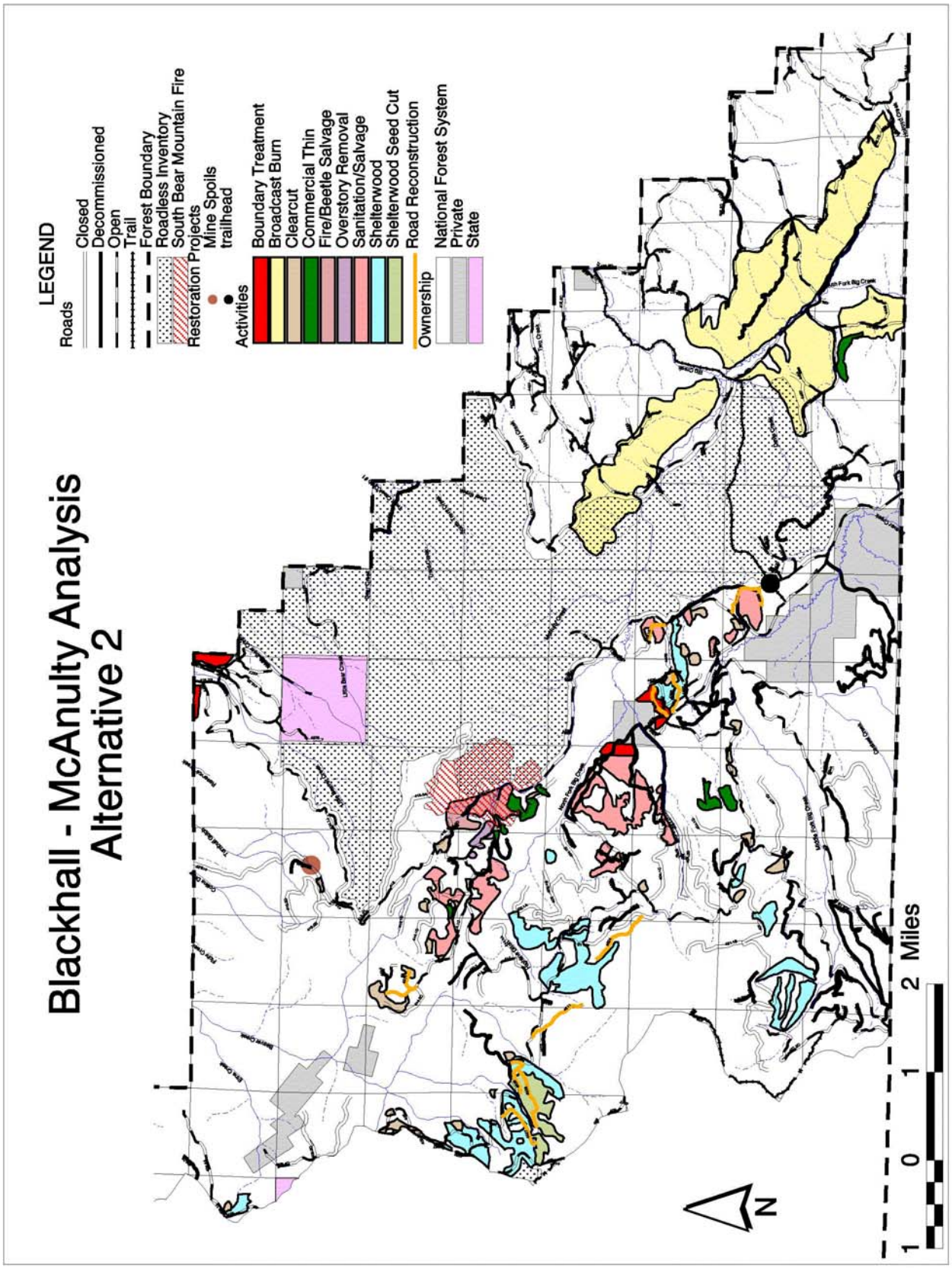
District Ranger
Brush Creek/Hayden Ranger District
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland

Map 1


Blackhall - McAnulty Analysis
Road Decommissioning
LEGEND
Road Decision
Road to be Decommissioned
Leave Open
Roads
Closed
Decommissioned
Open
Trail
Forest Boundary
Roadless Inventory
South Bear Mountain Fire
Ownership
National Forest System
Private
State
1 0 1 2 Miles
N

Map 2


Blackhall - McAnulty
Travel Management Changes
From Alternative 2
LEGEND
Changes From Alternative 2
Road Added to Leave Open
Road Changed to Candidate for Closure
Road Changed to Leave Open
Roads
Closed
Decommissioned
Open
Trails
Forest Boundary
Roadless Inventory
Ownership
National Forest System
Private
State
N
5 Miles


Blackhall - McAnulty Analysis
Alternative 2
LEGEND
Roads
Closed
Decommissioned
Open
Trail
Forest Boundary
Roadless Inventory
South Bear Mountain Fire
Restoration Projects
Mine Spoils
trailhead
Activities
Boundary Treatment
Broadcast Burn
Clearcut
Commercial Thin
Fire/Beetle Salvage
Overstory Removal
Sanitation/Salvage
Shelterwood
Shelterwood Seed Cut
Road Reconstruction
Ownership
National Forest System
Private
State
N
1 0 1 2 Miles